

**NASIR-I KHUSRAW  
AND ISMAILISM**

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THE ISMAILI SOCIETY

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SERIES B No 5

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# NASIR-I KHUSRAW AND ISMAILISM

*by*

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## NOTICE

The aim of the "Ismaili Society," founded in Bombay on the 16th February 1946, is the promotion of independent and critical study of all matters connected with Ismailism, that is to say, of all branches of the Ismaili movement in Islam, their literature, history, philosophy, and so forth. The Society entirely excludes from its programme any religious or political propaganda or controversy, and does not intend to vindicate the view-point of any particular school of Ismailism. The "Ismaili Society" propose to publish monographs on subjects connected with such studies, critical editions of the original texts of early Ismaili works, their translations, and also collections of shorter papers and notes. Works of various authors are accepted for publication on their merits, i.e. the value of their contribution to the knowledge of Ismailism. It is a consistent policy of the "Ismaili Society" to encourage free exchange of opinions and ideas so long as they are based on serious study of the subject. It may be noted that the fact of publication of any work by the "Ismaili Society" does not by itself imply their concurrence with, or endorsement of, the views and ideas advanced therein.

## PREFACE

This booklet is intended to elucidate an important point in the biography of Nāsir-i Khusraw, the famous mediæval poet and philosopher of Persia, which until now has remained rather obscure. It is his real relations with Ismailism. Although the deplorable scarcity of reliable information does not permit us to do this with the desired degree of finality, it is hoped, nevertheless, that what has been said here constitutes a step forward in that direction.

The legend, or cycle of legends, which has grown around Nasir's name, has been deliberately ignored here. These legends by themselves may present a fascinating subject of research for specialists in folklore, perhaps of much wider interest than merely for the biography of the worthy. But for our purposes references to the legend would merely introduce confusion and complicate our work.

I have to offer my sincere thanks to those of my Ismaili friends who gave me their valuable assistance in this study, and to the "Ismaili Society" who have kindly taken up the publication of this note in their series.

*Bombay, May, 1947.*

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### *Introduction*

SOME time ago a friend of mine brought me from Chitral two manuscript copies of a booklet which is not uncommon in those localities. It is known under the title of *Shish faṣl-ı Shāh Sayyid Nāṣır*, i.e. “(The book of) Six Chapters by Nāṣır-i Khusraw.”<sup>1</sup> I have seen it previously and, in fact, glanced through it very cursorily many years ago. It then gave me the impression of being spurious, an imitation. Accordingly, in my “Guide to Ismaili Literature,” published in 1933,<sup>2</sup> I mentioned it amongst the doubtful works of Nasir (p. 95). Having gone carefully through the new copies, which I collated, I felt compelled to revise my earlier opinion, and admit that the work is most probably genuine. The reasons for this are discussed further on.

Having decided to edit the text and prepare a translation, I made up my mind to go through all the known works of Nasir, in the first instance in order to look for any reference to the *Shish-faṣl*, and, secondly, with the object of generally ascertaining its position amongst other works by the same author. In the process of doing so I came across many references to Nasir's biography, personality, activities, and so forth, chiefly connected with his position in Ismailism. Much of this had already been known to students for

a long time. But, owing to very insufficient and erroneous ideas of Ismaili doctrine, and generally of Ismaili affairs of his time, known only through the falsified and distorted accounts of enemies of the movement, it was usually either disregarded or wrongly interpreted. As the connection with Ismailism forms the pivot of the story of Nasir, I believe it would be useful to students to systematize and make accessible such references. I have no ambition to re-write here Nasir's biography. As for this, I am sure, the time has not yet arrived.

The chief purpose of this note, therefore, is to draw the attention of students to the fact that the traditional view-point upon the subject requires thorough revision. Nasir's bulky *Dīwān* merits further study, with new methods and new orientation. Owing to its peculiar nature, as explained further on, it is more replete with biographical allusions than, perhaps, the *dīwāns* of many Persian poets, especially of Nasir's period.

A moralist, such as Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself was, might relish citing his case as an example of "reward in life after death." How many talented poets attained recognition, wealth, well-deserved fame and admiration during their life-time only to be soon forgotten? But the unfortunate Nasir, whose life was one of suffering and the misery of exile in a wild place, now, nine hundred years after his death, has become a real celebrity. All his works are being edited and studied, streets are named after him in the capital of Persia, and in many other ways is he remembered. Hardly any other Persian author,

except perhaps that fictitious collective poet who is known under the name of ‘Umar Khayyām, can rival his case. And yet a cynic may easily prove that all this is as much a play of incidental concatenation of circumstances as in any other instance. The attention of the West was drawn to Nasir not by his poetry, moralization, or faithfulness to the cause of Ismailism, but by his *Safar-nāma*, an account of a journey which he undertook not out of pure love of adventure, and described in the course of the propaganda campaign to glorify the Imam of his time. His poetry, which next attracted attention, evoked the admiration of European scholars not for its artistic perfection, but for quite an incidental reason. At that time in Germany, and more so in early and mid-Victorian England, people were still much under the influence of the Bible. In the crude and rustic poetry and primitive moralizing of Nasir such scholars found, perhaps quite unconsciously, something which to a great extent coincided with their habitual idea of the “real wisdom of the East,” really “inspired poetry.” While being unable not only to appreciate, but often simply to follow, the really great achievements of the poetical art of Persia as too exotic for them, they were quite at home in the primitive, simple writings of the exile of Yumgān. Nasir’s fame in Persia is an imported product. It has been brought from Europe together with many other foreign notions. Still in the second half of the last century the name of Nasir merely conveyed to the educated Persian an idea of a super-heretic and super-magician, as he was painted by the

legend. His works remained practically unknown except for the two didactic *mathnawīs* and a few *qaṣīdas*.

We know the best Nasir as the traveller, have some idea of him as a poet and moralist, but our hitherto universally accepted ideas of him as an Ismaili appear not only insufficient but mostly incorrect. This paper is intended to some extent to fill this gap. For the sake of brevity I will presume that the reader is sufficiently acquainted with the general biography of Nasir, from the introduction by Sayyid Ḥasan Taqī-Zāda which he prefaced to the Tehran edition of the *Dīwān* (1929), written in Persian, or from the pages devoted to the poet in E. G. Browne's "Literary History of Persia" (which is substantially obsolete now).<sup>3</sup> Taqī-Zāda's work, excellent as it is, however, possesses a serious drawback against which the reader is to be warned: it does not reject the legend which has already begun to grow around Nasir's name at an amazingly early period. It tries to find a way of reconciling and making partial use of it in a biography chiefly based on the analysis of the author's works themselves. Personally, I believe it would be a safer policy not to touch a source of information to which we have no key to understanding. The possibility may not be entirely ruled out that such legends contained grains of truth, but truth distorted and perverted is as useless as plain untruth.

Popular collective fancy and imagination turned Nasir into a super-magician and super-heretic, just as Avicenna became a super-scholar, Ḥasan b. aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ

a super-assassin, 'Abdu'l-lāh b. Maymūn al-Qaddāh a diabolical conspirator, and so forth. Popular memory is remarkably inconsistent. While many real heroes and great men are completely forgotten within a comparatively short time, fantastic figures arise, who, once created, live centuries, and instead of fading out of memory, they increase in stature and acquire more glamour. In the case of Nāṣir-ī Khusraw we may believe that his selection for such an absurd part was made not so much for his own attainments but on account of his close association with Ismaḥism. The grandeur of the background, against which his solitary figure stood, magnified it immensely, striking popular imagination, and setting it at work. Persians are real poets by nature, but at the same time very conservative and rather inactive in their mental life. They would not be bored by the retelling of the story of Layla and Majnūn or Khusraw and Shīrīn by scores of poets, but would take special interest in the question as to *how* it was retold. Thus the original theme of Nasir the magician, once invented, was permanently introduced into the field of Persian mythology, and retold with absurd and fantastic details, entirely divorced from historical truth.

### 1. *Various Details of Nasir's Biography.*

#### a) *Nisba.*

It is strange to see that Nasir's *nisba* was so often discussed in detail, and nothing definite was decided. *Nisba* does not necessarily indicate the exact place of its owner's birth. In modern practice, which was obviously also at work during the mediæval periods in Persian history, for the convenience of the public everyone who was born in a small and little known village or town would designate himself after the province to which his native place belonged, or, if the province was very large, the capital town of the district. Thus a native and inhabitant of Qāsimābād, a hamlet in the district of Sirjān, in the province of Kirmān, would call himself not Qāsimābādī, but Kirmānī. It was only when special precision was for some reason required, would he call himself Kirmānī Sirjānī Qāsimābādī (or use these *nisbas* in reverse order).

Nāṣir-i Khusraw who called himself Marwazī Qubādiyānī, although in his *Dīwān* he very frequently mentions Balkh as his residence where he had his house and family, is perfectly right. He was born in Qubādiyān which was a small town little known outside the province to which it belonged. As the capital of the state to which Qubādiyān belonged was Marw, he called himself also Marwazī.<sup>4</sup> Balkh was merely his residence, probably temporary, although he obviously had there some immovable property. Thus there is nothing in the least strange in his two *nisbas*.

## b) Name

In his *Safar-nāma* he calls himself Abū Mu‘īn Nāṣir b. Khusraw. The participial forms Mu‘īn, Nāṣir were at that time, when they came into general use, always combined with *dīn*, *dawla*, etc. It is difficult to believe that Mu‘īn by itself was used as an official name; it should have been Mu‘īnu’d-dīn. Similarly, Nāṣir is an abbreviation, and originally should have been Nāṣiru’d-dīn. Such names, or rather religious surnames, did not form the original name of a man, but were given, or assumed, as a sign of respectability, of belonging to the middle or upper class. Thus we may note that in reality we do not know the original name of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

## c) Was Nasir a descendant of ‘Alī, Sayyid?

If you tell a Badakhshani or Qanjutī Ismailī that Nasir was not a Sayyid, he will become very offended and angry. On this point they have no doubt, and the learned amongst them are always ready to point out a passage in his works which testifies to this. Sayyid Ḥasan Taqī-Zāda, in his valuable introduction to the *Dīwān*, mentioned above, touches on this matter, quoting various passages in the *Dīwān* in which Nasir denies being a Sayyid, or rather politely declines to claim the privileges connected with this. But it may be noted that he overlooks at least two important quotations in which Nasir calls himself an ‘Alawī, i.e. Alid, as on p. 98, line 5: “What wouldst thou say, why has this ‘Alawī of noble birth (*gawhar-pāk*) fallen into this prison and these fetters?” Or,

on p. 97, line 14 : " We (=I) are related to the relics of the progeny of the Prophet " (*mā bar athar-i 'itrat-i Payghambar khwāsh-īm*).

It is often said that 'Alawī means a Shi'ite. I doubt very much that this was ever so. When, as Mr. Taqī-Zāda points out,<sup>5</sup> he incidentally calls himself a *Fāṭimī*, this is perfectly right. Early Ismailis really called themselves *Fāṭimī*. Thus there is quite enough reason to believe that Nasir was really a Sayyid, but as it was probably difficult to prove this with documents in hand, he exercised modesty and religious self-effacement in connection with this.

d) Nasir's social standing.

The poisonous effect of the legendary biography of Nasir makes his figure absurdly inflated : he is the most learned man ; occupies a very high position in the state, later on in the Ismaili hierarchy ; in his young days was, as Mr. Taqī-Zāda says (p. 10), "*ham-majlis wa ham-piyāla*" of kings, i.e. participant of the assemblies and drunken orgies of princes, and so forth. Scrutinizing Nasir's own statements, we can see that all this is based on misunderstanding.

Born, as he himself mentions (p. 173, 9) in 394/1004, obviously in a family belonging to the government officials' class, he probably followed the custom of that time and entered the service at an early age. He evidently received very little systematic schooling, and his works bear the clear stamp of an autodidact. As a gifted and mentally alert youth he undoubtedly took much real interest in many things, although this



never amounted to anything like his poetry's years-long search for truth. Otherwise he would hardly have devoted his time (as he himself says in his *Dīwān*, p. 156, lines 17-19) to composing indecent or frivolous (*hazl*) poetry and "practicing such vices that when you remember these, your face becomes dark, and mind becomes depressed." This, of course, is expressed in poetry in which hyperbolism, exaggeration, is the fundamental law. Most probably this simply means that he enjoyed his life and composed ordinary love songs, which in the strictly religious outlook of his old age appeared to him as shameful frivolity. In his youth he imagined that his hand "was as high as the moon" (p. 156, lines 13-14), because the *amīr*, i.e. most probably the Ghaznawid prince, "never takes the wine cup into his hands *without me*." This may imply that in his youth he was a favourite servant whose duty it was to serve wine. But from the context it is possible to conjecture that this is merely a hyperbolic poetical expression for the fact that in his drinking orgies the *amīr* to whom he alludes, being fond of Nasir's songs, always sung or recited, or ordered his singers to sing, the verses composed by him.

We may note that the change of the dynasties took place in his mother country in 429/1038, when he was already 35 years of age. When only eight years later, in 437/end 1045, he set out on his great journey, he was, as he himself writes, a kind of controller of accounts in provincial revenue offices, a post of some importance but, of course, by no means one of the

highest in the state. The details of his journey fully support the impression that he was far from a top-ranking official. He starts with only his own brother and a single Indian slave. Surely, an official of importance would not go on a pilgrimage in such an "austere" manner. It is quite probable that the change of dynasty had affected his career, as can be seen from the mention of his own brother who probably occupied a really high post. That high position of his brother perhaps may explain his personal experience at the Ghaznawid court. The patriarchal conditions of life at that remote period would easily have permitted the successful courtier to bring to the court his relatives who could serve in some way. <sup>6</sup>

Being very religious by nature, Nasir was also very superstitious, believing in all sorts of *talisms*, astrological calculations, and so forth. He himself mentions that he tried his hand at alchemy "out of greed." In all his works it is difficult to discern any sign of high theological erudition, "the learning" of his time, and especially any spark of originality, of creative genius. Almost all his prose works (except, of course, the *Safar-nāma*), deal with elementary philosophic matters, which he repeated over and over again, never making any advance or introducing any new and original idea. He surely can be compared neither with such an erudite Ismaili scholar as Abū Hātim ar-Rāzī, nor a masterly expert in theology and philosophy such as Hamīdu'd-dīn al-Kirmānī, nor even the second class author such as Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijistānī or as-Sijzī, whom he attacks and abuses. His

contemporary and teacher, al-Mu'ayyid ash-Shirāzī, a diplomatical and seriously learned, intelligent man, was certainly much superior to him

A tall, robust, rustic looking man, Nasir brings into his works the rustic, primitive atmosphere. All of them bear the indelible stamp of rustic uncouthness, crudeness, and of a hard struggle in expressing even the most ordinary ideas. Nasir was not a pioneer in writing on philosophical matters in Persian, but his style is extremely unartistic, dull, full of unnecessary repetitions,—again, no spark of genius, or originality, all monotonously boring, invariably tending to the repetition of commonplace truths and platitudes.

As he appears in his best work, the *Safar-nāma*, he was by his outlook a country squire, always with a keen eye on matters which belong to the usual circle of interests in his native country. He pays special attention to irrigational facilities of the lands through which he passes, bazar prices, trade, industry, in addition to his favourite *philisms*, and other superstitious beliefs. Historical associations do not exist for him ; apparently he knew nothing of history.

But it would be wrong to take him for a sincerely and deeply modest man, conscious of his own shortcomings. No, he knows his own price, and even puts it far higher than would others. He never misses an opportunity for boasting, and his own learning and works appear particularly important and valuable to him. His drama is the frustration of his ambitions, non-recognition of his own importance ?

2. *Conversion.*

It is generally accepted that Nasir went on pilgrimage probably as quite a devout orthodox Muslim, and was converted to Ismailism in Egypt through which he had to pass on his way to Mekka, returning to his native land as an Ismaili missionary of such a high rank as a *ḥujjat*. All this appears to be an accumulation of misunderstandings.

Of what religion was Nasir originally? There is no direct answer to this question in his works, including the *Dīwān*. He continually eulogizes the Imam of his time, al-Mustanṣir bi'l-lāh, sometimes, very ambiguously referring to eminent Ismaili worthies, as to Mu'ayyid, Nu'mān (Qādī Nu'mān, the great Ismaili jurist, d. 363/974)<sup>a</sup>, and others. His references to Sunnism are invariably hostile. But what he invariably passes over in silence is the Ithna-'ashari doctrine and Imams. This is not because this branch of Shi'ism was not within his sphere of vision. We know perfectly well how widespread was Shi'ism in Khorasan and Central Asia in the fourth/tenth c. Balkh, Samarqand, Marw, and other cities had important Shi'ite centres. Ibn Bābūya, the famous Ithna-'ashari theologian (d. 381 or 391/991 or 1001), spent many years studying *ḥadīths* in the East prior to his departure to Baghdad. The inefficient Ghaznawid government hardly ever took energetic measures to suppress the Shi'ites. The Saljuqs altered this order of affairs, but by that time Nasir was, as we have already seen, 35 years of age. Nasir's own

rather boastful references to his "search for the truth," i.e. true religion, search for knowledge, and so forth, should not be taken too literally. For him obviously the truth was only in Islam, and we may easily realize that that "truth" was the authentic interpretation of religion which can be received only from the Imam. It is thus quite possible that he might have been a Shi'ite. Perhaps the change of the dynasty, if it upset his career, the frustration of his youthful ambitions, even his probable contact with the Ismailis—all this together possibly inspired him to espouse the cause of the Fatimids whose star had never risen so high as at that particular time (only to begin its rapid decline almost at once). We know how many eminent Ithna-'ashari Shi'ites turned to Ismailism, and attained high positions in it, obviously taking their new religion sincerely and enthusiastically.

Popular religious psychology usually ignores the lengthy and often very painful process of "conversion," in a broad sense, to a new religion, with all its doubts, internal struggle, and other similar experiences, and remembers only that final and decisive moment that "flashes" to the convert who either "repents," or in some other way manifests his complete changeover. It is like the vision of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Nasir, strangely, never mentions such an all important moment, and this also to some extent may speak in favour of an admission of his Shi'ite persuasion. As a Shi'ite he had merely to transfer his allegiance from one line of the Imams to another, and this would be,

of course, a far less serious step than the conversion to Ismailism of a Christian, or even a Sunni

Disregarding rather obscure allusions in his *Dīwān*, we have two important statements by Nasir pertaining to his conversion. One is the oft-cited story of his religious dream, at the beginning of the *Safar-nāma*, and another is his "confession" in the form of the lengthiest of his *qasīdas* (*Dīwān*, pp. 172-177), known as "the poem in which he mentions the date of his birth."<sup>9</sup> It is poetry (and that makes all the difference), but fully deserves careful study. We shall return to it presently. The passage in the *Safar-nāma* (p. 2) is well-known, but we must take it up again.

"On a certain night I saw in a dream that 'some-one' (*yakī*) said to me : How long art thou going to go on drinking the potion that ruins human reason ? It would be better for thee to become sober.—I answered : The wise have not invented any better means for the purpose of reducing the sorrows of the world.—(The man in the dream) said : Senselessness and unconsciousness do not bring peace of mind. One cannot be called a wise man who leads people to unconsciousness. It is necessary to search for something that increases reason and wisdom—I asked : Where can I find that ?—He replied . those who search will find.—He waved his hand in the direction of the *qibla*,<sup>10</sup> i.e. Mekka, South West (which is also the direction of Cairo) and said nothing more."

If this is an allegory, as it obviously is, then its implications are perfectly clear, and the fact that Nasir offers his elaborate explanations, even quoting a

*ḥadīth*, and shows such ostentatious frankness, makes it rather overdone. Is it really necessary for a pious Muslim to introduce a prophetic dream to explain his desire to go on pilgrimage? "Significant dreams" to this day influence the decision in many peoples' lives, especially in Muslim society. In the dream described by Nasir the most important point is *who* was the man who admonished him to cease drinking. Surely, Nasir himself well knew the harm that he was causing to himself, but obviously the speaker in the dream was someone of especial importance, the Prophet or the Imam, not named by him out of peculiar modesty. It is generally believed that the Prophet may "appear in a dream" only to deserving and pious people, and would not visit others. Thus the mention of a holy visitor is equivalent to the narrator's claim to exceptional piety and virtue.

It is therefore quite plausible that that is what Nasir wants to say. Perhaps his dissatisfaction with the conditions that came about under the Saljuqs, and probably sincere devotion to religion of the Shi'ite type, caused Nasir to be converted to Ismailism where he could recover from chronic drunkenness, i.e. practicing religious life without knowing its real meaning and implications. He was awakened from his intoxication, i.e. converted, and later he was summoned to Cairo, perhaps for higher training and instructions. Three hundred years later, another Ismaili, Nizārī Quhistānī of Birjand, in his versified *Safar-nāma*, exactly in the same way speaks of his own drunkenness, and then of his revival and departure

towards the Southern Caucasus where the Imam of his time was hiding in disguise. We know also that some time after his conversion Hasan b. as-Ṣabbāḥ was also sent to Cairo.

If we accept this interpretation of his "dream," it will be easy to understand why his departure shows the signs of suddenness,—the orders came, and he had to go. The route that he had taken strengthens this impression. If he had been a high official of the Saljuq state, he certainly would have travelled with the annual *ḥajj* caravan, in relative safety and greater comfort, by shorter routes. Instead of this, Nasir departs with only his brother and a slave, obviously in order not to have witnesses.

An interesting point is the question of his being financed on his way. Surely, to have carried enough gold for the expense of three men and several animals on an eight thousand miles' journey, would have necessitated quite a large sum of money, and would have exposed the party to grave risks. We see, however, that he always finds someone to help him to reach the next stage where he would receive further help. Would it therefore not be possible to suppose that the route which he took was chosen, in consideration of the Ismaili "cells" at which he, provided with necessary certificates, could "refuel" on his journey? He highly praises his benefactors, and this is an additional indication of their belonging to the sect. In his *Safar-nāma* Nasir does not waste praises on anybody or anything unconnected with Ismailism and the Fatimids.



Where and when his conversion took place, we have no means of ascertaining. But from what is mentioned above we may infer that it took place a considerable time—at least several years—before his rather sudden departure. Surely not every new convert was sent to Egypt, and not immediately after his having been converted.

### 3. *Nasir's Confession.*

In one of the *qaṣīdas* in his *Dīwān* (pp. 172-177 of the Tehran edition of 1929), the same as is known as “the poem containing the date of his birth,” and opening with “*Ay khwānda basī ‘ilm-u jahān gashta sarāsar*” . . . , Nasir offers us an extremely interesting account of his spiritual evolution. As far as I know, although it was often referred to, the poem has never been translated in full, or even comprehensively used, evidently because of the difficulty of deciphering the various allusions and implications of which it mostly consists. Many of its passages remain meaningless without extensive comments. Such passages are surely those which he wanted to reach only the initiated ones. It is a common feature of sectarian poetry of this kind · one has to know in advance the gist of its contents in order to understand the implications of its allegories and metaphors. We may try to offer here our version of it, decoding the poet's allusions as far as possible.

The poem, as so many of Nasir's poems, opens with the usual complaints on the injustice of the destiny which, without any apparent reason, gives one plenty,

while hunger and thirst to another, and which "has driven him into that dusty corner." The confession begins with p. 173, verse 7:

"Unlock thy heart, and take the Coran as thy  
(sole) guide,

"So that thou mayest know the right path, and  
that the door (of salvation) might become opened  
to thee.

"I would not be surprised if thou dost not find  
that path (easily),

"Because I was like thyself, lost and bewildered  
for a long time.

"When 394 years had passed since the flight  
(*hijra*) of the Prophet,

"My mother gave birth to me, bringing me into  
this dusty abode,

"As an unconscious growing being, similar to  
plants

"Which are born from black soil and drops of  
water . . . "

(He goes on, mentioning the stages of the development of the human organism in accordance with the usual theories of his time).

(13) "When the heavens had measured out 42 years  
of life to me,

"My conscious self began to search for wisdom  
(*khirad*).

"I listened to the learned, or read books in which  
they explained

"The constitution of the celestial spheres, the  
movement of time and elements.

- (15) “ Feeling that to me my own body is the dearest,  
 “ I inferred that in the world there must be some-  
 one who is the most precious of all that had  
 been created,  
 “ Just as the falcon is the noblest of the birds, or  
 the camel amongst the quadrupeds,  
 “ Or the date palm amongst the trees, or ruby  
 amongst the jewels,  
 “ Just as the Coran amongst the books, or Ka’ba  
 amongst the houses,  
 “ Or the heart amongst the organs of the body, the  
 sun amongst the luminaries.  
 “ As I pondered over this, my soul was filled with  
 sad thoughts.  
 “ I began to ask questions from thinking people  
 of their opinions :  
 “ From the Shāfi’ites, Malikites, Hanafites I asked  
 what they said.  
 “ I began to search for the guidance of the Chosen  
 One of God (i.e., the Prophet).  
 (20) “ But when I asked (my teachers) about the  
 reasons for (various) injunctions of the religion,  
 or the verses of the Coran on which they are  
 based,  
 “ None proved to be helpful, one resembling the  
 blind, and the other the deaf.

(*Āyatu’l-bay’at*).

- “ Once I happened to read in the Coran the  
 “ verse of the oath ” (XLVIII, 18),  
 “ The verse in which God said that His hand was

stretched out (for being touched while swearing allegiance).

“Those people who swore allegiance “under the tree” (i.e. at Ḥudaybiyya, in the 6th year A.H.)

“Were the people like Ja‘far,<sup>11</sup> Miqdād, Salmān and Abū Dharr.

“I asked a question from myself: what had happened to that tree, that hand,

“Where can I now find that hand, that oath, that place?

“The answer to this was only: there is now neither the tree, nor that hand,

“That ‘hand’ has been scattered, the assembly has dispersed.

(25) “All of them were (sincerely) devoted to the Prophet, and were rewarded with Paradise.

“Particularly for having taken that oath, being chosen from amongst the ordinary mortals.

(p. 174) “Said I (to myself): In the Coran (XXV, 58, 62; IX, 32) it appears that Aḥmad

“Is the Announcer and Preacher (of the Truth), the Light shining (in darkness).

“If any unbeliever wishes to extinguish that Light, blowing with his mouth,

“God will re-light it again, despite the efforts of all the unbelievers.

“How has it come about that to-day there is neither that hand nor those men?

“The word of God, surely, cannot turn out to be untrue.

- “ Whose hand should we touch when swearing allegiance to God ?
- “ Or should not (Divine) justice treat equally those who came first and those who came later ?
- (5) “ Was it our fault that we were not born at that time ?
- “ Why should we be deprived of personal contact with the Prophet, thus being {unjustly} punished ?

*{Longing and Search for Truth}.*

- “ My face became yellow as a flower from sorrow at being unable to find an answer to this,
- “ My back bent prematurely from sadness,
- “ When I reflected how much human existence
- “ Depends on the limiting laws of the inanimate world, vegetative force and animal life.
- “ Now, existing as an individual of body and soul,
- “ I am both the negation (*naskha*) of the eternity, and an eternity condensed (*mukawwar*). <sup>12</sup>
- “ The learned are (in this world) like muscus, their learning like its aroma,
- “ Or they are like a mine in which knowledge is enshrined as gold.
- (10) “ When muscus loses its aroma, or ore is emptied of its gold,
- “ Muscus becomes worthless, the ore contains only specks of gilt.
- “ When the aroma and gold are symbols of knowledge, let me then

- “ Get up and search for ‘ muscus ’ where it can be found, that extalled scroll.
- “ Then I rose from my place, and started on a journey,
- “ Abandoning without regret my house, my garden, those whom I was accustomed to see.
- “ From the Persian and Arab, Indian and Turk,
- “ From the inhabitant of Sind, Byzantium, a Jew, from everyone,
- “ From the philosopher, the Manichee, Sabean, from an atheist,
- “ Did I inquire as to what interested me, with much persistence. <sup>13</sup>
- (15) “ Very often I had to spend nights sleeping on hard stones,
- “ With no roof or cover over my head except clouds.
- “ Now roaming low, swimming as a fish in the sea,
- “ Now high in the mountains loftier than the Two Statues. <sup>14</sup>
- “ Now I passed through the country where frozen water was as hard as marble,
- “ Now through countries in which the earth was as hot as embers.
- “ By sea, by land, sometimes even if there were no roads,
- “ By hills, by sandy desert, across streams and precipices,
- “ Now with the camel’s halter rope over my shoulder as a true camelman,

- “ Now carrying my belongings on my shoulders as a beast of burden.
- (20) “ In this way did I wander from town to town, making inquiries,
- “ Wandered in search of the truth over this sea to that land.
- “ They said that injunctions of *sharī‘at* do not conform with reason (*na ba-‘aql ast*),
- “ Because Islam was established by the mere force of the sword.
- “ This I answered with a question : why then are prayers not prescribed to the children and weak-minded,
- “ If reason was not required for the discharge of religious duties ?
- “ I could never accept the blind following of prescribed forms (*taqlīd*), without any demand for explanations.
- “ The Truth cannot be proved by blind acceptance.
- “ When God wishes to open the gate of His mercy,
- “ Every difficulty is raised, and obstacles become (easily) overcome.

(*al-Balad al-Amīn*) <sup>15</sup>

- (25) “ And then came the day when I arrived at the gate of the City to which
- “ The luminaries of the heaven were slaves, and all kingdoms of the world subordinated.
- (p.175) “ I came to the City that resembled a garden full of fruit and flowers,

- “ Within its ornamented walls, with its ground  
planted with trees,
- “ Its fields resembling the pattern of precious  
brocade,
- “ Its Spring of Water which was as sweet as honey,  
resembling Kawthar,
- “ The City in which houses are virtues,
- “ The Garden in which pine trees are Reason,
- “ The City in which the learned are dressed in  
brocade,
- “ Not in the dress made of the wool of male or  
female goats.
- (5) “ It was the City in which, when I arrived, my  
reason told me :
- “ Here it is where thou shouldst seek for what  
thou needest. Do not pass through it in haste.

*(Wisdom Revealed).*

- “ And I went before the Warden of the Gate, and  
told him what I was after.
- “ He said : cease worrying, the jewel has been  
found in thy mine.
- “ Beneath the ideas of this world there lies an  
ocean of Truth,
- “ In which are found precious pearls, as well as  
Pure Water.<sup>18</sup>
- “ This is the highest Heaven of the exalted stars,
- “ Nay, it is Paradise itself, full of the most capti-  
vating beauties.
- “ Hearing him saying this, I thought he was  
Ridwān himself,



- “ So much was I struck with his wise words and admirable utterances.
- (10) “ Then said I unto him : my soul is weak and frail.
- “ Do not look at this my strong body and pink cheeks.
- “ But I never take a medicine without first trying and testing it,
- “ When I feel pain. I never would think or listen to what is unlawful (*munkar*).
- “ Said he : do not worry, I am here to heal thee.
- “ Tell me all, describe thy pain.
- “ And I began to ask him of the things that were first and those that were last,
- “ Of the cause of the order of the world (*tadbīr*) which is the basis of things as they are,
- “ Of what is genus, and the way in which species is formed,
- “ I asked about the All-Powerful, predestination and fate,
- (15) “ Both of which, in my opinion, are inseparable from each other.
- “ But how then should one be given precedence over the others ?
- “ I asked him of the mechanism of the palpitation of day and night,—how from these
- “ The beggar becomes rich, and darkness becomes lit?
- “ I asked about the Prophets, the questions put by (their) adversaries.<sup>17</sup>
- “ Of the reason for the prohibition of drinking blood or intoxicating wine.

- “ Then I inquired as to the foundations of *sharī‘at*,  
 “ And why these five prayers have been prescribed.  
 “ I asked about the fast that the Prophet ordered to be observed during the ninth month of the year,  
 “ About the *zakāt*, religious tax, paid in silver and gold coins.  
 (20) “ About the *khums* (fifth) paid in addition to the tithe,  
 “ Why should this be one fifth, and that one tenth ?  
 “ I asked about the principles in the division of inheritance into shares,  
 “ Why (e.g.) the brother takes one share while the sister only a half ?  
 “ I also asked about the cause of the uneven distribution of happiness :  
 “ Why does it (often) happen that a devotee is aggrieved while the oppressor happy ?  
 “ Or why one pious man is unhappy while another happy ? .  
 “ Or why one unbeliever enjoys his life while another is aggrieved ?  
 “ Why one is of sound health and good-looking while the other  
 “ Is born blind, or of weak health from birth ?  
 (25) “ But God always acts in perfect justice,—then  
 “ Reason cannot be satisfied by what it, in its imperfection, sees.

(p.176) “ I see that it is the day, but thou sayest that it is night.

“ I ask thee to prove that contention, but thou in reply drawest thy dagger.

“ Thou sayest that at a certain place there is a Sacred Stone,

“ And every one who performs a pilgrimage to it becomes venerable.

“ Āzar preached the religion of idolatry, and thou preachest the worship of that stone :

“ Then truly now thou art the same to me as Āzar !<sup>18</sup>

*(Oath of secrecy).*

“ When I mentioned all these my questions, the wise one lifted his hand, touching (with it) his breast.<sup>19</sup>

“ May a hundred blessings be now on that hand and that breast !

(5) “ He said: I shall give thee that medicine, tried and tested,

“ But I have to affix a strong seal on thy mouth.

“ He, that wise guide, summoned, as two legal witnesses, the world and man (macrocosm and microcosm),

“ And also all that can be eaten and used as drink.

“ I expressed acceptance, and he then sealed the medicine,<sup>20</sup>

“ Giving me a dose of it to take as a nourishing extract (*muzawwar*).

“ My suffering disappeared, my speech became free,

- “ My yellowed face became scarlet through joy.  
 “ He raised me from dust to the sky, as a ruby,  
 “ I was like dust, and became like precious amber.  
 (10) “ He it was who laid my hand into the Prophet’s  
       hand for the oath,  
       “ Under the same exalted tree, full of shadow and  
       fruit.  
       “ Hast thou ever heard that a sea comes from fire,  
       “ Or that a fox becomes a lion ?  
       “ The sun has the power of turning stone into  
       ruby  
       “ Which no force of elements can turn again to  
       its original state,—  
       “ I am like that ruby now, and the sun is He<sup>21</sup>  
       “ By whose light this dark world becomes lit.  
       “ Out of jealousy I cannot tell thee his name in  
       this poem,<sup>22</sup>  
       “ I can tell thee only so much that Plato would  
       have been fit to become merely one of his waiters  
       (*chākir*).  
 (15) “ He is the teacher and healer (of souls), Helper  
       (of religion) (*Mu’ayyid*), from God.  
       “ It is hardly possible to imagine anyone equalling  
       him in wisdom and knowledge.  
       “ May that City be prosperous whose Warden of  
       the Gates he is !  
       “ May the Ship be safe whose anchor (captain) he is !

(Greetings to the Imam).

- “ O thou, whose well-reasoned poetry is the  
       standard of wisdom (*ma’nā*),

- “ O thou, whose prose is a model (*mastar*) for philosophy !
- “ O thou, under whose patronage learning is organised as arrayed troops !
- “ O thou, at whose greatness's (*faql*) door knowledge has pitched its camp !
- “ I request thee to convey greetings from this obedient slave,
- “ The greetings, moving and lasting (as the glittering of a) jewel which shines as a moon,
- (20) “ The greetings (fresh as) a drop of dew in the petals of a narcissus or *shamshād*, .
- “ The greetings delicious as the breeze blowing over the beds of lilies and jasmine !
- “ The greetings as pleasant and inspiring as the union with beauties,
- “ The greetings as clear and eloquent as the words of great poets,
- “ The greetings, as full of wishes of prosperity and happiness as the clouds of spring with rain water.
- “ The clouds that descend from the mountains pouring the rain as delicious as drops of muscus !
- “ The greetings as true and blessed as the spirit of Jesus, son of Mary,
- “ Sublime and harmonious as the blue sky,—
- “ (—convey all these) to the Owner of the treasury of knowledge and wisdom, and of the House of God (*Khāna'ī Ma'mūr*),
- “ The owner of the Great Name by Whom eternity exists,

- (p. 177) "To him born under the blessed planet for  
 Divine victory,  
 "The Pride of mankind, the Crown of the  
 universe,  
 "The image and flesh from flesh of his great  
 Ancestor and Forefather,  
 "Who is himself like the Prophet in counsel and  
 Haydar in battle !  
 "When he rides out, the world is filled with the  
 light of his glory,  
 "And the dust of earth becomes amber under the  
 hooves of his horse !  
 "Let the praises of these greetings glorifying that  
 Supreme Lord  
 "Be recited in the assembly on my behalf by Abū  
 Ya'qūb.<sup>23</sup>
- { 5) "Then praise to the one who has freed me,  
 "My teacher, the healer of my soul, the embodi-  
 ment of wisdom and glory.  
 "O thou, whose face is knowledge, whose body is  
 virtue, and heart—wisdom,  
 "O thou, instructor of humanity and its object  
 of pride !  
 "Before thee once stood, clad in that woolen  
 cloak,  
 "This man, emaciated, with pale face.  
 "It was the truth that except for thy hand I  
 ever touched with my lips  
 "Only the Black Stone and the grave of the  
 Prophet.

- "Six years (after this) I remained as an attendant  
of (the Prophet's) Blessed Image (i.e. the Imam),  
"Six years I sat in attendance as a servant at the  
door of the Ka'ba"<sup>4</sup>.
- (10) "Wherever may I happen to be for the rest of my  
life, always  
"I shall use my pen, inkstand and paper only to  
express my gratitude to thee.  
"So long as cypress trees sway under the blows  
of the breeze,  
"Let the presence (of the Imam) be adorned by  
thee as the garden is adorned by cypress trees ! "

#### 4. *The Confession Analysed.*

This is a classical *qasīda*, so typical of the earliest phase of Persian literature. At the same time it is so typical of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, his mentality, his style of poetry, his aspirations, everything. Apparently nobody has so far noticed that it contains an allusion which may perhaps help us to find out the date of the composition of the poem. It is a reference to al-Mustansir (whose name, however, is not mentioned, but who is obviously implied here, p. 176, line 22) as the one "in charge (*khāzin*) of wisdom, knowledge, and of the *Khāna'r Ma'mūr*," i.e. the Ka'ba. This can only refer to that Fatimid caliph's being recognized as the sovereign of the holy city. Such a position existed during his reign in 455-456/1063-1064, when the Ṣulayhid tribal chieftains held Mekka, recognizing themselves as the vasals of the Fatimids. Thus, if

Nasir's poem speaks of what was, and not merely ought to have been, then the poem must have been composed about 456/1064.

The *qaṣīda* was, beyond doubt, addressed to al-Mu'ayyid fī'd-dīn ash-Shīrāzī, of whom it is worthwhile to say a few words. This is done further on, in a note on his biography. He obviously was in charge of propaganda affairs in the East, "the Warden of the Gate in the Holy State," which implies that he was a *bāb*.<sup>25</sup> He accepts his oath of allegiance (if this is not merely a poetic figure, and the original oath of secrecy was sworn by Nasir while still in the East). This oath surely does not refer to conversion, but to Nasir's being received into the propaganda service (usually designated by the expression *akhadh 'alay-hi*). It would be strange that if he remained a Sunni until his arrival in Cairo, he should have been converted by no less a figure than al-Mu'ayyid himself, and at once accepted into the service. We may note, however, that Nasir never mentions any "guide" who led him to the *Baladu'l-amīn*, the Holy State. It is quite probable, therefore, that he was really converted by a small missionary in his native place, and was then summoned to Cairo, where he was examined, found useful as a prospective missionary, accepted into the service, trained, and then sent on various tours prior to his departure to his native country where he was designated to carry on his work.

The questions which worried him, and to which he could find no satisfactory answer, such as that about the "hand," i.e. the principle that only the progeny



of the Prophet could have legitimate right of supreme authority in Islam, are elementary Ismaili. This is said in poetry, and we must expect some simplified and primitive scheme. It would be interesting to find the real implication of his expression in which he refers to the "hand" being scattered (*ān dast parā-kında shud*). This may well refer to the school of the Twelver Shi'ites and discontinuation of Imamāt.

His seeking for knowledge from the Sindhīs, Turks, Manichees, and others, is obviously a poetical figure. If he sought such knowledge, it was alchemical, astrological, but certainly not religious. The knowledge was obviously for him the Imam's super-knowledge, in the Shi'ite sense. His philosophical quests appear to be a list of the contents of his own works: all exasperatingly dull and lengthy discussions of the creation, of *'aql*, *nafs*, *hayūlā*, and so forth; the problem of predestination, evil, with occasional excursions into the field of physics. All this, beyond any doubt, he found in plenty in the *da'wat* literature of his time, and, later on, having translated it into simple, primitive Persian to suit his probably not highly educated pupils, he repeatedly offered it in the form of his philosophical books. It seems that he possessed neither talent nor systematical schooling to be a real philosopher, i.e. one who creates new ideas and not merely repeats what he has read.

The enchanted city in which he arrives, and in which al-Mu'ayyid is the Warden of the Gates, is not Cairo. His *al-baladu'l-amīn*, an expression which is taken from the Coran (XCV, 3), is the ideal Ahl state, the advent

of which the Fatimids were preaching. Shi'ite expectations are sometimes alluded to in his *Dīwān*. In some places he is quite outspoken (p. 431, lines 14-16): "The world cherisheth the hope of thy victory (he addresses al-Mustansir bi'l-lāh), expecting that thou wilt sweep off the dust from thy sword. When thou seest the whole of it (i.e. conquerest the whole world), at once peace will descend upon it, after all those disasters and calamities. When thou dismountest from thy horse in Baghdad, the Abbasid devil will come out to greet thee, slaughtering his own son as sacrifice for thy good luck."<sup>26</sup> This is probably a vague echo of the events of Nasir's time when the *khutba* for the Fatimids was introduced in Baghdad by *al-Basāsiri* (killed in 451/1060).<sup>27</sup>

The late Prof. E. G. Browne proclaimed Nāsir-i Khusraw as a rare exception amongst the Persian poets who wrote his poetry as "an artist creating for art's sake," never making it a means of attaining any material advantage. Prof. Browne was an incorrigible optimist. Surely, the poem that is translated here, was not sent for nothing to al-Mu'ayyid, and it clearly requests him to remind the Caliph about him. Nasir even plainly asks for arrangements to be made that it should be recited by a certain Abū Ya'qūb, obviously one of those recitators of the Coran or poetry, heralds, who were employed at the Fatimid court. Nasir's other poems are also of the same kind. Quite naturally they are all addressed to eminent Ismaili people. We may ask, to whom else could a poet in the position of Nāsir-i Khusraw send poems from his Yumgān?

Nasir was certainly no exception in this sense, only he had no opportunities.

We shall discuss the question of his aims in dedicating such poems to al-Mu'ayyid, or to the Caliph himself in the section devoted to Nasir's position in the Ismaili hierarchy. According to the ideas of his time, *qaṣīda* was a form of composition intended for a definite purpose, and he hardly ever thought of disregarding this. From his works, we cannot imagine him as a sort of modernist who would write "letters that have never been posted," simply for pastime.

#### 5. *Nasir's Missionary Work.*

As may be seen from the *K. al-'Ālm wa'l-Ghulām*, the new convert, in the event of his being found fit for work in the propaganda service, properly trained, "conditioned," and carefully tested, was required to start "paying a dividend" to his new masters in the form of his useful activities. So, surely, was Nasir, after his six years' stay in Egypt and contact with local specialists, symbolised in the person of al-Mu'ayyid. In his *Safar-nāma* and other works he never gives us the slightest clue as to whether he had any commissions during his apprenticeship, or on his way back to Khorasan. This, of course, was a "state secret" which no-one could dare to divulge amongst Ismaili missionaries. He returned safely to his home in Balkh on Saturday, the 26th Jum. II 444, i.e. 23-x-1052, as he notes in the *Safar-nāma*, and then begins the darkest period in his biography. The next date which appears to be reliable in his story is that of the

composition of the *Zādu'l-musāfirīn*, completed in Yumgān in 453/1061. Thus we have a gap of nine years.

It is highly probable on logical grounds that to this period belongs his visit to Māzandarān. Concerning the fact that such a visit took place there are apparently no doubts. It is alluded to in some of Nasir's poems, and attested by his contemporary, Abū'l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydī'l-lāh in his book, *Kutāb Bayāni'l-adyān*, completed in 485/1092. There would, of course, be nothing in the least strange in the fact that a missionary, returning from Cairo with instructions and news to a locality comparatively near to the Caspian provinces, would have been instructed to visit the place. Logically it would be difficult to believe that he could make such a visit *during* his exile in Yumgān, returning to it after having had opportunity to use his talents and enthusiasm in a far wider and religiously promising area.<sup>28</sup>

In Māzandarān itself, with its long connection with Shi'ism, its impenetrable jungles, inaccessible gorges of the lofty mountains, and, at the same time, comparatively easy communications with the outer world, he would obviously find conditions far superior to those in the Yumgān trap. The most probable conjecture, therefore, would be that some time after his return from Egypt he went to the Caspian provinces, and returned to Balkh, whence he had to flee to Yumgān. He often refers to that fateful event when the crowd, probably incited by some fanatics, rushed to his house and destroyed it, and he had a narrow

escape. But, unfortunately for us, he never permits us to glean any details as to when and how it happened. Such "prosaic" details would be quite unsuitable to poetry.

It is improbable, of course, that a crowd would attack the house of a pious Muslim who just returned from the *hajj* pilgrimage. Surely some time had to pass before the real face of Nasir became known to his neighbours. Quite possibly, after having rested for a few months, he went to Māzandarān, remaining there a year or two. By that time his activities and his association with the Fatimids perhaps became known, and when the news of his return spread in Balkh, an attack on his life was made. He was incidentally saved by flight. This appears to me the most logical course of events; but it must be noted that it is simply a suggestion. Whither he fled from Balkh, and how he came to Yumgān,—of this we know nothing.

If we look at the map, we may perhaps find some suggestions. Flight to the West was obviously impossible because he would have been arrested on the desert roads which follow the line of watering places. He therefore most probably turned to the localities near his native Qubādiyān, perhaps in the hope of hiding amongst his own people.<sup>29</sup> It is quite probable that he was compelled to move further on, and it is not impossible that an idea came to him to leave the Saljuq state and seek refuge with the Ghaznawids, in view of his former associations. It is perhaps for this reason that he proceeded as far as

Yumgān, and ultimately found himself in a trap from which he never again was released.

Yumgān is the name of a district, a side valley branching off the main Hindukush range, irrigated by a stream which bears now the Turkish name of Kokcha ("blue river"), a tributary of the Upper Oxus. The district begins a few miles above the town of Jarm (4,800 feet above sea level). The valley, which is fairly broad and flat, rises rapidly in a Southern direction, so that its average elevation is at least over 6,000 feet. It is hot, dry and dusty in summer and very cold in winter. There is little cultivation, it is very thinly populated, and the spot shown as the burial place of Nasir is situated on a hillock in the valley. There is nothing remarkable, as I was told by many Ismailis who have visited the spot, and the grave is very modest. Local inhabitants who regard themselves as Sayyids, and descendants of Nāsir-i Khusraw, are fanatical Sunnis who by no means encourage Ismaili pilgrimages to the grave. They believe their ancestor, Nāsir, was a Sufic *pīr*, and, being a Sunni, had no connection whatsoever with Ismailism.

Those Shughnīs, Chitrālīs, Zabākīs, etc., from whom I tried to find information about the grave of Nasir, and who professed to having visited the spot, invariably and uniformly pronounced the name of the district as Yumgān, with u, and the name of the town which stands lower downstream as Jarm, with a. However, the Survey of India map (16 miles to an inch, published in 1918) introduces "learned emenda-

tions," writing Jurm, Yamgān. Such "editing" of geographical names is an invariable feature of the maps published by that institution.

According to the information supplied by pilgrims, the spurs of the Hindukush range which form the valley are very high and steep, so that there are no cross-paths between Yumgān and the neighbouring valleys. In fact, there are only two exits, one in the North, passing the town of Jarm, and the other, to the South, over the snow-clad passes leading to the valley of Kabul and further to India.

It is quite possible, although this again is nothing but a suggestion, that, having decided to go to the Ghaznawid country, Nasir entered Yumgān only to find that he was not wanted by the prince.<sup>30</sup> The accusation raised against him, that he was an agent of the Fatimids, was too serious. It was punishable by death, and the Ghaznawids were hardly so liberal on the one side, and, on the other, would scarcely risk injuring their neighbourly relations with the Saljuqs for the sake of a heretic. In a situation such as this, Nasir had to stay where he was, in the narrow valley which proved to be his prison, and from which only death released him.

Although rarely a *qaṣīda* of Nasir does not contain complaints about his "prison" and his hard life, privations, sufferings, old age, etc., he never permits us to form an opinion as to how he was living there and what he was doing: was he really alone, or had some disciples. If that was so, who were they, local people, or those who came from the plains, to learn

from his wisdom? Was he preaching Ismailism locally? What were his facilities for communication with the outside world?<sup>21</sup>

We may only answer the last question: yes, surely, he had some means of communication with the outer world, even with Egypt, as otherwise he would not have written his *qasīdas* and perhaps other books. Most probably he was also able to receive *da'wat* books from Egypt; possibly also money for his upkeep.

Local tradition in Badakhshān (in a broader sense) repeats the story that Shāh Sayyid Nāsir was busy with converting local inhabitants, and even undertook extensive journeys in the East during which he visited India. I heard over and over again that all this is narrated in a book, called *Gawhar-rīz*, written by Nasir, narrating his adventures in the East just as the *Safar-nāma* describes his adventures in the West. For many years I hunted for that elusive book, asking every Ismaili coming from those localities, without so far having obtained it, or even getting on its track. From what it was possible to gather from the better educated and trustworthy people from amongst those who professed to have seen it, it is possible to express the opinion with a considerable degree of confidence, that the *Gawhar-rīz* is in fact either a part or imitation of the well-known legendary autobiography of Nasir, and that it is a plain fake. Nevertheless it would, of course, be very interesting to have a personal peep into it.

Nasir had a very unflattering opinion of the local inhabitants, most probably the peoples of local Shina



or Darda stock of whom possibly no trace remains now.<sup>22</sup> It would appear that the area generally was very sparsely populated, the people were very primitive, and missionary work amongst them hardly satisfied an ambitious man like Nasir. Personally I would not in the least trust the local tradition of the Badakhshani Ismailis which regards Nasir as the person who converted them to Ismailism. However paradoxical that may be, I venture to express an opinion that the present Shughnīs, Wakhīs and others were not yet settled there in Nasir's time. They came to that locality much later on.

Being much interested in the study of Persian dialects still spoken in various corners of the country, I often found many proofs of the theory that wherever there is a "nest" of villages speaking different dialects, we have to deal with a case of comparatively recent migrations, produced by peaceful or other causes. The fact that in such an arid, rocky and inaccessible locality as the valley of the Upper Wakhsh there are numerous hamlets the population of which speak various dialects, sometimes considerably differing one from the other, may indicate that such composite populations are due to a complex set of migrations. The existence of the Soghdian-speaking enclave of Yaghnob, South of Samarqand, may point the direction in which our search for explanation should go. It is not beyond the limits of possibility to suppose that the "hill Tajiks" who inhabit the hamlets of the Upper Wakhsh, and speak such a large set of profoundly varying dialects, are early

immigrants from the Soghdian plains who shifted there under the pressure of repeated waves of invaders, such as the Turks, later on the Mongols, and then again the Turks. As such migrations certainly were unorganised, the original inhabitants of one and the same locality could have been split and settled in many corners, and there, in different milieu, under varying influences, their original languages could have evolutionized in diverse ways, in the course of centuries deviating very considerably from their sister-dialects. If we also assume that the emigrants were sometimes compelled to migrate owing to religious persecutions, and that especially the Shi'ites found themselves persecuted, it would be easy to understand why the population of Badakhshān (in a broad sense) professed Ismailism, perhaps since an early period, and remained faithful to Shāh Sayyid Nāṣir, creating the legend of their having been converted by him.

It was probably these Iranian immigrants from the Upper Zarafshān valley who brought with them from Soghd the *Ummu'l-kitāb*, the sacred book of their Khattabite forefathers (*Mukhammisa*), and, retaining it, incorporated it into the small literature of the Ismaili period which very slowly grew up amongst these often illiterate settlers. Nasir, in his poems, never boasts of successes in his propaganda work, or mentions these in his "reminders" to the Cairo headquarters. This, however, is probably due to the fact that such matters related to the *da'wat* affairs which were inappropriate for mention in poetry.

There is much speculation over the date of Nasir's death. The latest date mentioned in his *Dīwān* makes him seventy years old, of course, in a round figure. This brings us to 464/1072. It is quite possible that a robust man like Nasir could have lived ten years more. Thus possibly 465 to 470/1072-1077 would be the most probable date of his demise. As far as I could ascertain from pilgrims, there is no date on his grave.

It may be noted that in India the Ismailis of the Musta'lian branch (the Bohorās) have a traditional tendency to disown Nasir, saying that he was a Nizari. This, of course, is based on ignorance and the fact that Nasir's works are in Persian, and the Persian-speaking Ismailis are now Nizaris. In fact, however, Nasir died about twenty years before the Nizari-Musta'lian split in the community, and had nothing to do with it whatever. His works, compiled from Fatimid *da'wat* books, propound the same doctrine as the contemporary Fatimid works in Arabic.

### 6. *Nasir's Rank in the Hierarchy.*

In his poems Nasir uses the *takhalluṣ*, or pen-name, *Ḥujjat* or *Ḥujjat-ı Khurāsān*, and this has been universally accepted as the proof of his occupying such rank in the hierarchy. One may find in every work on his biography that in Egypt he was appointed as the *ḥujjat* of Khorasan. As many of such universally accepted facts this seems to be based on a misunderstanding.

The functions of the *hujjat* in the Fatimid propaganda organisation form one of the most impenetrable mysteries for the student. It seems that no work clearly defines them. We do not even know whether the *hujjat* resided in his province, or in Cairo, directing the affairs in his see from thence. No names of *hujjats* have been preserved in Isma'ili historical books, or rather no cases have been recorded in which it is stated that so-and-so was a *hujjat*. The title of Sayyid-nā Hamīdu'd-dīn al-Kirmānī, *hujjatu'l-'Irā-qayn*, may be simply a honorific surname.

The territory of Khorasan during the early Saljuq period comprised Khorasan as it is now, and included the North-Western part of what is now Afghanistan. We do not know whether the Fatimids had such a poet as the *hujjat* of Khorasan, and whether he resided in one of its cities. It is, however, obvious that Nāṣir-ī Khusraw, a comparatively new convert, a man without much experience, compromised in the eyes of the local government, and, in addition, trapped in a remote corner on the fringe of the province, was hardly suitable for such a part. As to his pen-name in his poems, it would be much more reasonable to suggest that it was simply a crude device to put a suggestion to the headquarters, an indirect prayer to the Imam for such an appointment. It would be extraordinary for him to think that he could look after the affairs of his see from his "prison" in Yumgān. If he could have escaped from there, it is strange that he had not done so much earlier. In such a case we are entitled to think that his "de-

tention " in Yumgān was not so much due to danger from his enemies as to orders from Cairo, and that his *qaṣīdas*, continually fiddling in a plaintive tone on his sufferings, loneliness, old age, and many other similar matters, were all intended to propitiate his masters and make them change their decision. Judging from the fact that he died in Yumgān, we may infer that he never succeeded in receiving that coveted jesture. So far as I could make out after years of inquiries and asking specialists in Isma'ili religious literature, Nāsir-i Khusraw's name is never mentioned in Fatimid literature and his works simply do not exist in it, though probably this is because they are in Persian.

#### 7. *Khawāja Mu'ayyid.*

Before we proceed to the question of Nasir's works, we may say a few words about his "Warden of the Gates" of the Holy City under whose supreme command he probably was.

Sayyid nā al-Mu'ayyid fī'd-dīn Abū Nasr Hibatu'l-lāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Mḥd ash-Shīrāzī *as-Salmānī*, a native of Shīrāz or Ahwāz, where he flourished, came to Cairo in the same year as Nasir, 439/1047, and died there in 470/1077.<sup>33</sup> Contrary to Nāsir, he was exceptionally well educated, knew Arabic excellently, was a public man, playing a prominent part in the Daylam, i.e. the Persian Shi'ite party in its struggle against the "fifth columnists," the Atrāk, or pro-Turkish Sunni party, which raised its head owing to the development of the Saljuq successes.

With the advance of the Saljuqs the position of the Daylam, and his own together with them, gradually deteriorated, and he had to flee to Egypt. In his autobiography, *Sīrat Sayyid-nā al-Mu'ayyid*, or *as-Sīrat al-Mu'ayyidiyya*,<sup>34</sup> he gives an interesting picture of the state of Western Asia at the period of the Saljuq invasion. It merits careful study by the historians of Persia. It has little or nothing to do with religious matters and Ismailism, and is a vivid contrast to Nasir's *Safar-nāma* in every respect. It comes better under the head of memoirs such as those by Usāma b. Munqidh, Ibn Khaldūn, and Nuwayrī.

Sayyid-nā al-Mu'ayyid was a prolific author, and his main work was eight volumes of his *Maḡālīs*, each volume containing one hundred summaries of his lectures, written in highly ornate prose. In their present form they have been edited by the post-Fatimid *dā'ī*, Hātim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 596/1199). He also prepared a synopsis of the whole work, in 18 *bābs*, under the title of *al-Mu'ayyidiyya*, arranging the quotations according to the subjects.

For other works of al-Mu'ayyid see my "Guide," pp. 48-49. Here we may only note that he has to his credit a small volume of Arabic poems. As he was probably a native of Ahwāz, and as possibly he wrote also poetry in Persian, we may suggest that perhaps the mysterious poet Ahwāzī, referred to by Nasir,<sup>35</sup> may in fact be al-Mu'ayyid in his young days. A Persian translation of *Qāḍī* Nu'mān's classic *Asās-u't-ta'wīl* is also attributed to him. Copies of this are very rare, but I managed to see one. Its

language was quite modern, and this may have been due either to the fact that it was repeatedly modernized, or, more probably, that it was prepared by some one in India in modern times, and was attributed to al-Mu'ayyid simply because he was known as a Persian.

The works of al-Mu'ayyid still enjoy great popularity amongst the Musta'lian branch of the Ismailis in India; from a literary point of view they present outstanding specimens of artistic prose of the fifth/eleventh c., well meriting an edition. From the viewpoint of their contents, and their value for the study of the history of Ismailism their importance would hardly be great, however.

There is no doubt that he ultimately occupied a very high position at the court of al-Mustansir *bi'l-lāh*, but this must have taken place towards the end of his life. When Nāṣir-i Khusraw came to Cairo, he also was a newcomer. Therefore Nasir's praises, the title of "the Warden of the Gates" of the Holy City, etc., obviously belong to a much later period, when he was himself already in Yumgān.

#### 8. *The Works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.*

In his *Dīwān* (p. 256, line 8) Nasir says: "Except with the spiritual help of the Descendants of the Prophet (*ta'yīd-i āl-i Rasūl*), I would have neither had any book to my credit, nor anything to teach others." We do not know whether he had to his credit any books written before conversion. Although dates are attributed by some to certain his works earlier

than his return from the journey, all this seems to be utterly unreliable and based on misunderstanding.<sup>36</sup> It is quite possible that, except for composing some love songs in his young days, he really never produced any "book," i.e. a substantial independent literary work. We can easily believe this if we forget the legendary biography and its absurdly high talk of his learning. It seems more than probable his visit to Cairo proved to be of a real educational value to him. Not only did it widen his outlook, but it presented him with an unlimited opportunity of reading Isma'ili and other books of which he probably saw very few before his journey. We can ignore the inflated figure of Nasir as a philosopher, and accept the real picture of a devout man who, coming to work for the sacred goal, had before him the definite purpose of teaching his new converts, for whom all his prose works were evidently compiled. These works are openly and unequivocally popular, both in language and method, and all of them surely form mere adaptations of or compilations from various original Arabic works. When Fatimid literature is edited and indexed, it will probably not be so difficult to identify the sources of Nasir's inspiration. The general Muslim public, not familiar with Isma'ili literature, and only accustomed to thinking of Isma'ilism as a paragon of heresy and impiety, was much interested in his works, never imagining that his wisdom in reality was the philosophy of the alleged heretics. It is remarkable that many of his prose works, such as the *Zādu'l-musāfirīn*, *Khwānu'l-Ikhwān*, *Gushā'ish wa Rahā'ish*,



his *Safar-nāma*, all were preserved amongst the non-Ismaili public. Even his *Dīwān*, except in lithographed editions, is not known in Badakhshān (in a broad sense). The Badakhshānīs only have preserved the *Wajh-i dīn*, apparently the only work of Nasir which may be classed as a *da'wat* work, his *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* and *Sa'ādat-nāma*, didactic poems, and *Shish-Faṣl*. The book wrongly ascribed to Nasir, but by far the most admired and studied by the Badakhshānī Ismailis is the *Haft-bāb*, also called *Kalām-i Pīr*, an indubitable fake not more than three hundred years old, based on an earlier work, *Haft-bāb-i Abū Ishāq*.<sup>37</sup> There are also a few shorter *risālas*, some of which may be genuine, but the majority are obviously spurious.

The chronology of Nasir's works is extremely difficult. It seems to me that the earliest, or at least one of the earliest, works should be his *Safar-nāma*, for the obvious reason that it is undoubtedly based on a diary which he kept while travelling. It is difficult to imagine that at that tragic moment when he had to flee, he could have taken with him all his notes and books.

Perhaps his really first poetical work was the *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* which is sufficiently familiar to students. As is known, much has been written on the date of its composition which in different manuscript copies varies within a wide range between 323 to 463 A.H. H. Ethé, who edited its text (together with some one's versified paraphrase which is found in only one copy, and which the editor mistook for an introduction),<sup>38</sup> on the basis of his learned de-

ductions, comes to the conclusion that the poem was completed in Cairo on the 'Īd-i Fitr day, 440/9-III-1049. All this sounds very unconvincing because no known copy actually has that date, and, of course, the question arises, for whom was the poem in Persian intended in Cairo? It seems that the copy now at my disposal offers the solution. It originates from Chitral, and was evidently transcribed by a man of limited literacy who would hardly have ventured to adulterate the text. It gives the date 444 A.H. The verse in which it is incorporated shows the correct metre together with plain sense, and this circumstance inspires certain confidence. The archaic *j* here stands for *ch*:<sup>39</sup>

*Ba-sāl-i jār (chār) šad jıl (chıl) jār (chār) bar sar*  
*Ki hıjrat kard ān Rūh-i Mutahhar.*

What makes me ready to accept this reading as correct is a small detail which is found in all versions of the poem but which has so far invariably been disregarded. It is a *bayt* (541, line 18 in the *Diwān*):

*Khudāwandā ki īn naw-bāwa bıkr ast*  
*Zi man būda'st-u ū-rā dāya bıkr (fıkr) ast.*

"O, God, this is the first-born, virgin product,

"Which came from me, being received by the midwife of thought."

This does not sound a mere boast of the originality of his work, and may really indicate the fact that the *Rawshanā'i-nāma* was his first composition. As he says in the same passage, he completed it within a week,<sup>40</sup> and it was ready on the first of Shawwāl 444, i.e. 24-1-1053. Why not believe that, having returned to his native Balkh, and having rested after his long

and adventurous journey, he took up this work during the month of Ramaḍān? Pious people often do similar work during the enforced leisure which the month of fast brings with it. The tone and technique of his poem really show the hand of a beginner.

But the story of the *Rawshanā'ī-nāma*, about which so much has already been written, does not end here. The same copy from which the verse containing its date has been quoted above, includes a short prose work, of which I also have received another copy, but without the poem, and which is known in the "greater Badakhshān" as *Shsh-faṣṭ-i Shāh Sayyid Nāsir*, i.e. "Six-chaptered book" of Nāsir. The remarkable fact is that the original title of the booklet, as is unequivocally stated in its *muqaddima*, is also the *Rawshanā'ī-nāma*! The author says: "*Wa nām nihādīm mar-ū-rā Rawshanāhī-nāma*<sup>41</sup> *bad-ān-chi andar ū rawshan ast mar-khātīr-hā-yi tīra-rā. . .*" The other copy, entirely independent as can be seen, verbally agrees with this. It is therefore easy to see why the Badakhshānīs, amongst whom copies of the poetical *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* are common, had to introduce another title for the booklet.

The reason for such exceptional case as the use of one and the same title both for a poem and a prose work by one and the same author is very difficult to find. The suggestion that the prose work is an introduction to the poem seems improbable because neither contains any mention of this, it is longer than the poem, and the manner of prefacing prose preambles to poetical works appears in Persian literature only

much later, perhaps first in the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī. The simple explanation would be that the prose *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* is a work of one of Nasir's pupils. But this supposition is positively contradicted by a reference to an earlier work, *Misbāḥ wa Miftāḥ*, which the author claims as his own (*wa sharḥ-i tā'at wa khaḍū'-i 'Aql mar Bārī-rā Subḥāna-hu andar kitāb-i Miftāḥ wa Misbāḥ ki pīsh az īn ta'līf karda-īm ba-da'il-hā-ye 'aqlī gufta shuda ast*). This work is mentioned both in the *Gushā'ish wa Rahā'ish* and the *Khawānu'l-Ikhwān*<sup>42</sup> in the expressions which imply its being Nasir's own work.

The prose *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* is divided into six *faṣls* . 1. *dar shinākht-i tawḥīd* , 2. *dar Kalma-i Bārī* , 3. *dar Nafs-i kull wa junbīsh-i ū* , 4. *dar paydā āmadan-i nafs-i mardum bā 'aql* , 5. *dar wājib dāshtan-i Nātiq wa Asās wa Imām* , 6. *dar thawāb wa 'iqāb wa sharḥ-i ān*. Thus it covers all the usual philosophical and religious topics. Probably quite unconsciously, the author makes some Christian gnostic motifs and influences clearly felt in his theories. I hope to edit and translate this work.

It is quite possible that another work with a Persian title, the *Gushā'ish wa Rahā'ish*, may also belong to an early period of the literary activities of Nasir. It is not mentioned in the *Shish-fasl*, but referred to in the *Khawānu'l-Ikhwān*, and consists of questions and lengthy answers, concerned with the same inevitable cosmic primal realities, the *'Aql* and *Nafs*, but also takes considerable interest in physics. This, generally speaking, is also a proof of the earlier origin of the

work : in his later works Nasir does not touch on such matters.<sup>43</sup>

It is quite possible that another well-known *mathnawī* poem of Nasir, the *Sa'ādat-nāma*, may either be an early work of his, or, perhaps, the work of one of his disciples, done under his supervision. It is undoubtedly inferior to *Rawshanā'ī-nāma*.

Nasir also refers in his later works to his *Bustānu'l-'aql* or *Bustānu'l-'uqūl*, about which nothing is otherwise known. For other works, mostly small *risālas*, of which some may be genuine, but the majority are not, see my "Guide to Ismailī Literature," pp 93-96. A few notes on his major works, i.e. *Khwānu'l-Ikhwān*, *Zādu'l-musāfirīn*, *Wajh-i dīn*, and the *Dīwān*, are offered here.

#### *Khwānu'l-Ikhwān.*

This work, "the feast (of knowledge and wisdom, offered) to brothers (in religion)" was edited in Cairo, 1940, by Dr. Yahyā Khashshāb from the copy dated 862/1458 in the Aya Sophia Library, Constantinople. The edition, which shows traces of insufficient proof-reading, is provided with a short introduction in French, and an "austerity" index (for which, of course, we, nevertheless, must be grateful to the editor). The work is divided into a hundred chapters called *ṣaff* ("row," presumably of guests, at the table), dealing with the usual Nasir's repertoire : creation, primal realities, soul, resurrection, retribution, life after death, Barzakh, Hell, etc. The general impression that the book produces is that of a preliminary

version of the *Zādu'l-musāfirīn* or notes from which it was later on compiled. The subjects seem to be exactly the same, but the treatment in the *Zād* is far more systematic and mature. It cannot be called a *da'wat* work, but rather propædæutics to the full-blooded Ismaili *ḥaqā'iq* works. It was apparently intended for the general public, especially those people not much versed in Arabic. The author evidently makes every effort to avoid Arabic terms, replacing these with their Persian equivalents, not always with much success, however, and invariably translates every Arabic sentence that he finds himself forced to quote. On the whole the book is not very closely connected with Ismailism as a religion, and the fact that it has been preserved only in strictly orthodox milieu (as were some of his other works) proves the absence in it of anything that would shock a strictly orthodox reader.

The work, for these reasons, would hardly be of much use to the student of Ismailism except for a few pages of controversial contents which relieve its monotony, its moralizing tone, and its philosophical manner: the author strains every nerve to appeal to reason more than to anything. He takes some basic ideas which appear to him as unshakeable foundations, and which invariably do not look at all convincing, and over them builds a "house of cards" from his own deductions and inferences which lead us nowhere. It is remarkable, however, that such methods have immense appeal for people brought up in that school of thought. When I gave a copy of the *Khwān* to a

learned Badakhshānī Ismaili, it filled him with such admiration that he unhesitatingly proclaimed it the best and most important work in Nasir's heritage.

The author refers in the *Khawānu'l-Ikhwān* to his earlier works: *Miṣbāḥ* (20, 113, 116), *Miftāḥ* (148, 153), *Dalā'il* and *Dalīlu'l-mutahayyirīn* (239), and *Gushā'ish wa Rahā'ish* (28, 85). He incidentally refers to Ibn Qutayba's *Adabū'l-kātib* (57) and Abū'l-Hasan al-'Āmirī's *Maqālāt* (114), from general literature.<sup>44</sup> Of the Ismaili works he mentions the *Bāhira*, *Sūsu'l-baqā*, and *Kashfu'l-mahjūb* by Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijistānī, just as in the *Zādu'l-musāfirīn*,<sup>45</sup> and gives interesting information concerning the early work, *Kutābu'l-Mahṣūl*, which he definitely calls the work of the martyred eminent missionary, *khwāja'i shahīd* Abū'l-Ḥasan Nakhshabī (111, 112),<sup>46</sup> although, as I have pointed out in my paper on "Early Controversy in Ismailism," there are some doubts concerning this. He even mentions Nasafī's sons (115) Dihqān and Ḥasan Mas'ūd (signs of interrogation, however, show that the editor was not quite certain as to the meaning of the passage).<sup>47</sup> The most interesting feature of the *Khawān*, however, if it is genuine, is a reference to 'Abdān, the *ṣāhib-i jazīra'i 'Irāq*, the rebel *dā'i* of the third quarter of the third/ninth c. If it is not a misreading on the part of the editor, it is the first reference to him in Ismaili literature that I have so far come across in spite of my persistent and long search and inquiries from specialists.<sup>48</sup> It is unfortunate that the editor in his text does not give references to the pages of the original manuscript.

This should always be done when unique copies are edited. It would be worthwhile obtaining a new set of photographs of the 42 *saff*, for re-examining the matter.

*Zādu'l-Musāfirīn*

This work, of which only two manuscripts are known, was edited in 1922 by the now late Dr. M. Bazlu'r-Rahmān, under the guidance of the late Prof. E. G. Browne, and printed in the Kaviani Press, Berlin. Unfortunately for students, it was not provided with indices without which it is extremely difficult to handle, and generally presents a relic of that absurd policy of Cambridge University, faithfully copied by all Indian Universities, of encouraging beginners to take a mouthful which they cannot swallow. Taking up texts of enormous size and serious difficulty which they are quite incapable of handling properly, only instils students with complete distrust of their own abilities and powers, and for the rest of their lives frightens them from undertaking any serious work. This proved to be exactly the case of this work and its editor.

As Nasir himself mentions (280), he completed it in 453/1061, obviously in Yumgān, as may be inferred from his complaints (402): "Ignorant people in the community declared that I was a heretic (*bad-dīn*), attacked me, and chased me from my house and my city." The work is referred to in the *Diwān* (305, 330), and implicitly in the *Wajh-i dīn* (29), which, therefore, should have been of a later origin. It is



obviously compiled from Arabic sources, especially the classic work by Sayyid-nā Hamīdu'd-dīn al-Kirmānī, the *Rāhatu'l-'aql*, which deals with similar matters. In this work, however, Nasir, apparently intending his book for the general reader as much as for his pupils, excluded practically all purely Ismaili elements, leaving only allusions here and there. Such precaution really did preserve the work amongst the orthodox who probably regarded it as a treatise on philosophy in general.

The work is divided into 27 *qawls*, devoted to the usual subjects such as matter, space, time, movement, quiescence, the Creator, transience of the world, man, soul, retribution in future life, and so forth. There is apparently not an original word in it, and the whole may be safely classed as a compilation. Nasir's speculations, his method of artificial constructions, deductions from usually quite fantastic and arbitrary basic ideas, all lead the reader into quite a strange and unnatural world. The difference between the modern mentality and his would approximate to the difference between photography and the artist's expressing his visions in the pattern of an old Persian carpet. Both may portray the garden and flowers, but the carpet way of expression is so much conventionalized that it would require special efforts to decipher and understand what the artist was aiming at, before we can believe that this is really a garden and that is really a flower.

In the same way as in what most probably was the earlier version of this work, *Khwānu'l-Ikhwān*, its

almost unbearable monotony is slightly relieved by Nasir's taste for controversy. Here also he makes an attack on Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijzī, calling him a lunatic, and charging him with heretical beliefs in *tanāsukh*, transmigration of souls. In his preceding work (112) he attributes similar views to the author of the *Maḥṣūl*: "and he, may God be pleased with him, teaches metempsychosis and transmigration of souls from one body to another." Apparently similar beliefs in Sijistānī's works evoke in him a very sharp reaction. It would be difficult to believe that the cause was some personal animosity, for the simple reason that Abū Ya'qūb died long before Nasir was born (soon after 360/971). Anyhow, he again (421-430) refers to *R. al-Bāhira*, *Sūsu'l-baqā'* and *Kashfu'l-mahjūb*, mentioned above. The *Bāhira* is in existence. It is an opusculum, in Arabic, of about 2,250 words, dealing with eschatology. Reading through its pages, one fails to discover any traces of *tanāsukh*.

We may also consider an important circumstance: as one may see from my paper on a "Controversy," mentioned above, the *Maḥṣūl* was specially examined and corrected by one of the most erudite Ismaili specialists, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, who was commissioned by the headquarters to put dogmatical matters in order. This he did in his *K. al-Islāh*. Some fifty years later, the whole question was re-examined again from the point of view of the standard dogma, *qānūnu'd-da'wat'l-hādīya*, by another eminent expert, Sayyid-nā Hamīdu'd-dīn al-Kirmānī, in his *K. ar-Riyāḍ*. He pointed out those statements of the

*Maḥṣūl* which were overlooked by Rāzī. And yet neither of these two experts refers to any heretical ideas of *tanāsukh* entertained either by the author of the *Maḥṣūl*, or by Sijzī.

What seems to me quite probable is that Nasir gives the term *tanāsukh* some unusual implications. We may suspect that it might have been what the theologians term the dogma of "resurrection in flesh." Nasir, perhaps intentionally, does not make this clear in order that his book should not seem outrageous to the orthodox.

He also accuses Abū Ya'qūb of promoting the principle that those devotees who have attained the "higher knowledge" may be exempted from the obligatoriness of the usual forms of worship, and may be permitted to "worship in spirit." Such Sufic and gnostic theory, as I have pointed out in the paper on "Controversy," was really lurking in the dark corners of *ta'wīl* speculations on the *sharī'at* of Adam, and other similar tales. This, however, is a long way from insanity and condemnation of Abū Ya'qūb as a heretic.

In his *Zādu'l-musāfirīn* Nasir often attacks the Dahrite, or materialistic ideas of the famous mediæval philosopher, Mhd b. Zakariyā ar-Rāzī (born 250/864, d. ca. 313/925), "Rhazes," as he was called in Europe. It would be incautious, however, to believe that such attacks were really due to Nasir's own familiarity with the doctrine of Rhazes, and were not transplanted from those Fatimid works in Arabic in which they are quite common, and which he perused.

There is, however, a really interesting feature in this work, namely, Nasir's reference to that enigmatic figure in the history of Muslim philosophy, a certain Īrānshahrī, of whom no definite information has ever been discovered. Judging from Nasir's sympathetic and respectful references to him, he might have had some connection with Ismailism. Unfortunately, however, various references to him do not tally chronologically. Thus there were either two persons, not one, with the name Īrānshahrī, or such anachronisms may be due to a misreading of his name. "Ḥakīm Īrānshahrī" (says Nasir, 98) "explained philosophical ideas in religious terms in his *Kutāb-ı Jalīl* and *Kutāb-ı Athār* [both unknown] and other works, calling people to the religion of God and the knowledge of *tawhīd*." Further on (102): "those good words which Ḥakīm Īrānshahrī said concerning the eternity of *hayūlā* and space." Thus it would be easy to suggest that the Ḥakīm was one of the learned Ismaili missionaries. As is known, Bīrūnī, in his book on India, also refers to a certain Abū'l-'Abbās al-Īrānshahrī, who seems to have been his teacher, had some connection with India, and compiled a book on various religions, including Brahmanism and Shamanism (or Buddhism). He was in correspondence with Bīrūnī, and it was under his influence that the latter undertook his famous work on India. From all these allusions it may be inferred that he flourished towards the end of the fourth/tenth and beginning of fifth/eleventh c.

This, however, is entirely obliterated by Nasir's reference to the "vile and heretical words" of Rhazes in which he answered the theory of Īrānshahrī who, in addition, is called the *predecessor and teacher* of Mḥd b. Zakariyā ar-Rāzī. Thus the period of his activities must at once be moved back at least a century.

The rare *nisba* Īrānshahrī, written in Arabic letters, may perhaps be confounded with Abarshahrī, from Abarshahr, the ancient name of Nīshāpūr.<sup>49</sup> Anyhow, Nasir does not help us to solve the problem.

*Wajh-i dīn.*

Nasir's only book which is written in the style of Fatimid Ismaili works intended for the use of students, is obviously a compilation from various Arabic works. Almost all through the text one can feel that it is a translation from Arabic, retaining the original order of words. It was printed by the Kaviani Press, Berlin, 1924, from the photographs of a single modern copy. This edition is full of mistakes and badly needs a thorough revision. The work surely deserves a decent critical edition, and especially a detailed index of terms and subjects. The copies of this work are very common in the "greater Badakhshān," because the book is carefully studied by every literate Ismaili. The British Museum has a copy of it dated 929/1523, while another, dated 1155/1742, is in my possession.

It is a book for study and therefore does not contain any passages from which some chronological indications may be gathered, and never refers to any earlier work. There is no doubt that the contents of the *Wajh-i dīn*

are entirely derived from the standard and classic Ismaili works of the Fatimid period ; it is not so easy, however, to identify which of them Nasir perused, because his crude and rustic rendering into Persian not only makes it difficult to see what Arabic term the author translated in this or that case, but also entirely alters the general tone. We may be perfectly sure that Nasir knew and perused such basic Ismaili works as the *Da'ā'imū'l-Islām* by Qādī Nu'mān ; or his *Asāsu't-ta'wīl*, or the *Ta'wīlu'z-zakāt* and other works by Ja'far b. Maṣṣūri'l-Yaman ; various works of his patron, al-Mu'ayyid, and others.

There is a vague allusion (210-211) to adverse circumstances and that was probably persecution of the Shi'ites under the new Saljuq rule.

#### *Dīwān.*

Just how long the collection of Nasir's poems which now is known as his *Dīwān* was accumulating, who took charge of his books and papers after his death, who selected his poems for the earlier versions of his *Dīwān*, and how other poems came into various anthologies,—all these questions have no answer. There is no doubt that amongst the poems which are regarded as his there may be many forgeries. This particularly applies to those of them which develop atheistic, blasphemous, and other similar ideas. Such poems could easily have been inspired by the legend of Nasir, as an arch-heretic, magician and alchemist.

Rigid and complex rules governing matters of style in Persian poetry, as is known, leave the poet almost

no freedom to express his thoughts in plain, sensible form. He may only allude to this or that, and such an allusion is obviously intended for those who can understand it. Therefore, for the student of Ismailism, the *Dīwān* does not promise much useful information. Even what little the author really wished to, and could, reveal, he had, by the requirements of style and poetics, to camouflage, cipher, efface, and make unrecognizable in every possible way. Such poetical references are not only difficult to decipher, but very often are treacherously misleading, especially in the case of the early author such as Nasir.

In his preface to the Tehran edition of the *Dīwān* (1929), Dr. Taqī-Zāda discusses Nasir's reference to his own "two *dīwāns* which are as big as the *dīwāns* of Buḥturī and 'Unṣurī" (p. 15, line 3). He infers that in addition to his Persian *dīwān*, Nasir had another one, in Arabic. I am sure this is an error. No direct and plain reference to the existence of Nasir's Arabic *dīwān* is known, and we may be sure that if he had one he would not fail to refer to it more than once. We may ask whether his *qaṣīdas* were already arranged into a *dīwān* at that early time? And whether the expression "two *dīwāns*" must necessarily refer to one Persian and one Arabic? Why not two Persian *dīwāns*? Many authors had several. In addition to this we must consider that it is modern usage to call a collection of one's poems simply "*dīwān*." The mediæval usage was to call them: *dīwān-i qaṣā'id*, *dīwān-i ghazaliyyāt*, whence we can see that the term *dīwān* still retained its original

meaning of a "collection," "roll." It might also imply a collection of prose works. I very much doubt that while he was still living there was anything in existence like a collection of his *qasīdas*, arranged and prepared for use in public. His *qasīdas*, surely, had a definite purpose, and if he collected these, he probably intended them to go to Cairo headquarters, to which the originals were first addressed. It is quite possible that his disciples copied some for their own use, and that someone, devoted to his memory, after his death collected a certain amount which became the nucleus of the *Dīwān* as we know it.

To offer a sound judgment concerning the merits of Nasir's poems, and his relative place amongst the prominent poets in Persian literature, would be possible only for those Persians who are not only gifted with the necessary talents of art-critics, but also have been brought up in the traditions of mediæval Persian poetry. I doubt whether many persons of such type are available now. Here I may only note a layman's impressions which, of course, have a purely personal origin, and do not in the least pretend to influence anyone's judgment.

Nasir's poetry is extremely monotonous, and, compared with the poems of many of his contemporaries, sounds just as crude and rustic as his philosophical works. Monotony depends on all these poems being *qasīdas*, which are subject to strict rules in composition. In a sense it would be fair to call the *qasīda*, as a poetical form, a camouflaged and poetically-coloured application to the authorities, a



business letter. Nasir handles them in his crude rustic way, and, not possessing first class talent, he leaves the stitches to leap into the eye. Almost all his poems are built on exactly the same plan. First the "prelude" in the form of a picture of nature, such as spring, flowers, and so forth.<sup>50</sup> Then follow complaints on the perfidy of fate, frailty of the world, the author's own sufferings. Later, also quite abruptly, comes a large dose of moralizing, in the nature of those good advices which are proverbially cheap, *naṣīhat*, using the Persian term. Finally, and just as abruptly, comes the praise of the Imam, al-Mustaṣṣir bi'l-lāh, and expressions of devotion.

To the *qaṣīda*-minded mediæval reader such seemingly unconnected partition was most probably of no consequence. He simply treated such a poem as several independent works of art, admiring the "how," not "what," in it (as the latter was previously known). From the modern point of view, however, such lack of unity constitutes a fundamental defect, destroying the whole enchantment of the poem. It would be counterbalanced to some extent by the quality of the verse, particularly those lines which "stick to memory." I doubt, however, whether Nasir has any or at least many such verses, or whether his poems are very musical and bear the fine finish of the poems of really great masters in Persian literature.

Although the editors of the *Diwān* as printed in Tehran, 1929, have spent much admirable enthusiasm, energy, acumen, and care in their difficult task, the

edition cannot be considered as final. Before this claim could be made, it would be necessary to examine those manuscripts which are available in European libraries, and improve upon the critical methods of selection. We must be grateful to them, however, remembering that perfection is extremely difficult to attain in these matters.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is a typical feature of the Badakhshani mentality to forget the original title of the book and call it by the number of its *bābs* or *fasls*. In no other locality are there so many of all these *haft-bābs*, *bist-fasls*, etc. If the chapters of the book bear another name, the book is simply called after them. Thus the *Rawdatu't-taslim*, supposed to be a work of Nasīru'd-dīn Tūsī, and divided into 28 chapters each called *tasawwur*, is known under the name of "*Tasawwurāt*". The *Sahīfatu'n-nāziri*, by Sayyid Suhrah Wali, divided into 36 *sahīfas*, is called *Si-u shish sahīfa*, and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> During the intervening years I have collected much additional information, and hope to prepare a second revised edition at the first opportunity.

<sup>3</sup> As recently as in 1940, another study of Nasir was published in Cairo, "*Nāsir ʿe Hosraw*," by Dr. Yahya el-Khachab (pp 347).

<sup>4</sup> There may also be another reason for which Nasir could call himself Marwazi. Geographical designation of kingdoms was not so much in use during the Middle Ages as was naming after the dynasty. Thus Nasir was a subject of the Saljuq State, whose capital was Marw. If, owing to lack of sympathy for the Saljuqs, he would like to define his own international position, without referring to them, he would certainly call himself the subject of the "*Mulk-i Marw*," i.e. in a sense Marwazi.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. p. 412, 21. This may mean, of course, that he claims descent from 'Alī and Fātima, because in many other places he refers to the Fatimid caliphs under the same name (100, 12; 101, 3; 101, 5, etc.)

<sup>6</sup> At the court of the Fatimids, probably much less patriarchal, sons and close male relatives of the wazīr and other high officials were allotted special places in solemn processions and other festivities.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. his own opinion about his *Zādu'l-musāfirin* (p. 330, 6): "Amongst my works there is the *Zādu'l-musāfirin* which is the standard and law to philosophy (*ma'qūlāt*). If someone would read it over the grave of Plato, the latter's ashes would praise it loudly." Cf. also p. 346, 13-14. Similar utterances are not uncommon in his *Diwān*, but we must not forget that

it is poetry. "The soul of Socrates will feel proud over (all) philosophers, if thou, O, *Hujjat*, wouldst appoint him a *ma'dhūn* of thine" (p. 406, 12)

<sup>8</sup> Cf p 370, 13 "that amongst religious schools (*madh-hab-hā*) there is none right and true except the school of Bū Ḥanifa Nu'mān" This is often quoted as a proof of Nasir's originally belonging to the Hanafite school. But *Qādi* Nu'mān was also Abū Hanifa

<sup>9</sup> The Badakhshanis themselves knew this well, and much appreciated it It was lithographed, by Sayyid Munir of Khuf, in Bombay some twenty years ago, together with the *Raw-shanā'i-nāma*, *Sa'adat-nāma* and few short prose notes

<sup>10</sup> This undoubtedly is a suspicious detail how could he see in his dream that the direction was that towards the *qibla*?

<sup>11</sup> This is Ja'far, surnamed at-Tayyār.

<sup>12</sup> Literally packed, although the same root conveys many other meanings.

<sup>13</sup> Such a "journey", of course, is quite a symbolical idea, while his privations, mentioned further on, obviously belong to his real journey to Cairo.

<sup>14</sup> *Paykar*, obviously the sun and moon.

<sup>15</sup> I use this expression because Nasir very often refers in his *Dīwān* to various expressions from this (XCV) *sūra*, obviously attaching special importance to it

<sup>16</sup> Water, as the life-giving element, symbolizes in *ta'wīl* the doctrine of the True Religion.

<sup>17</sup> The text is obviously corrupt here

<sup>18</sup> Āzar is the name of the father of Abraham, as mentioned in the Coran (VI, 74)

<sup>19</sup> This obviously has no ritual or symbolical meaning, and is simply a courtesy bow When the visitor finished his questions, Mu'ayyid, a courtier, politely pressed his hand to his breast (as a sign of sincerity), and bowed to express his consent and sincere readiness to help his friend.

<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that the doctor sealed the bottle containing medicine In Persia, formerly, the doctor, having diagnosed the illness, would give a prescription to which he

would apply his seal. Thus here it means that a proper medicine was finally prescribed.

<sup>21</sup> Here obviously "he" refers to the Imam, although further on the poet glorifies Mu'ayyid.

<sup>22</sup> This, obviously, refers to Mu'ayyid, not Mustansir. It is quite possible that we should not take this literally (this is poetry), because Mu'ayyid at that time was himself a newcomer in Cairo, and did not possess the importance and influence which he acquired later on. Almost certainly the glorifications of his exalted position refer to his status many years later, when Nasir was in Yumgān, and Mu'ayyid probably was in charge of the *da'wat* affairs in Persia.

<sup>23</sup> This certainly cannot have anything to do with Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijzi who died long before Nasir was born. Most probably this name belongs to one of those servants at the Fatimid court whose duty, on solemn occasions, was to recite the Coran, or poetry, or proclamation of the government, briefly, a kind of herald. It may be Nasir mentions this particular man because he knew him personally, and because he knew Persian. Cf. C. Inostrantsev, "A Solemn Procession of the Fatimid Caliph" (St. Petersburg, 1905, p. 29) (In Russian). This work is based on Maqrizi and Ibn Taghribirdi.

<sup>24</sup> That is, the Imam.

<sup>25</sup> He apparently really was a *bāb*, i.e. chief *hujjat*, but, of course, not at the time of Nasir's visit to Cairo. If the poem was really composed about 456/1064, i.e. 17 years after his arrival in Cairo, it would be quite possible by then he had already attained that exalted position.

<sup>26</sup> As is known, it is an ancient custom, at the solemn meeting of persons arriving as guests of honour to kill a sheep on the road so that the guest should step over the blood. This device makes ill-luck stay behind. In the case of important people bulls or camels are killed.

<sup>27</sup> Similar ideas are expressed in another poem (p. 43, 19-21) where the Abbasids are contemptuously called "hungry" (*gurusna 'Abbāsīyyān*). Another is found on p. 299, 5-7.

<sup>28</sup> In the *Sargudhasht-i Sayyid-nā*, quoted and summed up by Rashīdu'd-dīn in his *Jāmi'u'l-tawārīkh*, the words of Hasan-i Sabbāh are cited in which he mentions an Ismaili *dā'i*, Amīr Darrāb. It is added and before him *Nāsir-i Khusrāw Hujjat-i*

*Khurāsān agar-chi ū-rā chizi muyassar na-shud*, i.e. "although nothing was available to him" The passage is obviously an unskilled interpolation. Why should be the teachers of Sayyid-nā mentioned in a reverse order, and what does it mean that "nothing was available from Nasir?" Even if Nasir during his Mazandaran period could visit Ray, and this happened soon after his return from his journey, i.e. after 444/1052, Sayyid-nā could not be benefitted by such meeting. He died in 518/1124. Allowing that he was 80 years old when he died, he should have been born not before 438/1046. In 444/1052 he should have been not more than six years old. In 453/1061, the date of the completion of the *Zādu'l-musāfirin*, Nasir was already for a long time settled in Yumgān, while Sayyid-nā was not yet 15. In reality, most probably, he was much younger. We may add that in the story of al-Mustansir *bi'l-lāh* Rashīdu'd-dīn also mentions Nasir, saying that he settled *bar kūh-i Samangān*, and was living there on grass and water. Samangān here is obviously an emendation for Yumgān, because Samangān, or Sīminjān, is a town near Khulm, lying on a plain, and there would be no need to live on grass and water in it.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. p. 297, 23 "I have become associated with Yumgān, having broken connections with Qubādiyān"

<sup>30</sup> This is plainly alluded to in 331, 19-23, where, in his complaints, he quotes the words of his enemies "the Turks have chased him from Khorasan. Neither the Amīr of Khorasan accepts him, nor the Shāh of Sijistān (i.e. obviously the Ghaznavid prince), nor the Amīr of Khuttalān."

<sup>31</sup> Cf. p. 298, 5 "Every year I send a *da'wat* book (*yaki kitāb-i da'wat*) to all parts of the world (*atrāf-i jahān*)."

<sup>32</sup> He held a very poor opinion, however, of the local inhabitants (p. 467, 22): "O, unfortunate *Hujjat* of Khorasan, do not act as shepherd to a herd of pigs"

<sup>33</sup> On his works see "Guide," pp. 47-49.

<sup>34</sup> It is being now edited by Dr. M. Kamāl Husseini in Cairo.

<sup>35</sup> He mentions Ahwāzī twice p. 446, 18 and 475, 25, but gives no details.

<sup>36</sup> Such is, for instance, *Risāla dar jawāb-i nuwād-u yak faqara*, published together with the *Diwān* (1929), pp. 563-583, supposed to have been composed in 422/1031. It inspires grave doubts as to its genuineness, unless the date and dedication are some one's unskilled interpolations.

<sup>37</sup> See the "Addenda," pp. LIX-LXVIII of my edition of the *Kalām-i Pīr* (Isl. Res. Association's series, No 4, Bombay, 1935).

<sup>38</sup> At the time of H. Ethé there were only five copies of the work known in Europe, of which only one had that spurious appendix. Now at least a dozen copies are available, and none of them has it. In the localities inhabited by the Badakhshani Ismailis copies of the work are quite common. Those learned ones to whom I gave the paraphrase edited by Ethé invariably assured me that they had never seen it before, and that it appeared to them not to be a work by Nasir.

<sup>39</sup> Archaic spelling, usually quite inconsistently maintained in Badakhshānī manuscripts, is their typical feature. It is due to the low standard of literacy rather than to the survival of early tradition. In this particular copy, however, it seems to be more consistent than usual and therefore may perhaps indicate its having been transcribed from a really old original.

<sup>40</sup> The time devoted to the composition of various works, usually short ones, is occasionally mentioned in various poems. It often appears to be surprisingly short. The author may have had time only to write it, perhaps even being unable to read what he wrote. We must temper our surprise by keeping in mind the fact that the reference appears in poetry, where hyperbolism, either exaggerating or minimizing, is the basic feature of the artistic attitude.

<sup>41</sup> In various copies of Nasir's works there are frequent cases of "h" being used as a glide in a hiatus. Sometimes it is added where in ordinary Persian it is not used, or omitted where it is required. Thus one finds *Rawshanāhī* and *Rawshanā'ī*, *pādshāhī* and *pādshā'ī*, *panā(h)*, *gawā(h)*, etc., without any apparent difference in the use. It is obviously not easy to find whether that may be a trace of Nasir's own orthography, or the influence of the Tajiki pronunciation of Persian words. The latter seems to me more probable.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. pp. 20, 113, 116, of Dr. Y. Khashshāb's edition, Cairo, 1940. It seems that *Misbāh* is not mentioned in the *Diwān*.

<sup>43</sup> In any case, the *Gushā'ish* was written before the *Khwānu'l-Ikhwān*, because it is referred to in the latter, pp. 28, 85. A copy of it is in possession of the learned editor of the *Diwān*, Sayyid Nasru'l-lāh Taqawī, of Tehran. I intended to edit the text and translate it, but unfortunately I was unable to secure a reliable transcript of the original copy. The photostats in

the Egyptian library do not contain the complete text, and, moreover, they were taken from a modern transcript by someone who, to the distress of students, took upon himself the mission of correcting and bringing Nasir up-to-date, thus hopelessly adulterating the text

<sup>44</sup> For *Adabul-Kātib* see Brockelmann, G d a. L., I, 122, the editor puts a sign of interrogation after the second title, which is doubtful.

<sup>45</sup> More about these is said further on, under the *Zādu'l-musāfirīn*.

<sup>46</sup> Usually his name appears in the form of Abū 'Abdī'l-lāh Muhammad b. Ahmad. The *kunya* Abū'l-Hasan, especially in the name of a Shi'ite, is chiefly used with the name 'Alī. I have not yet found in the Fatimid literature any instance of his full name being given. It is quite possible of course, that Nasir is wrong. Nasafi died some sixty years before Nasir's birth.

<sup>47</sup> Both names are very strange. In his poetry Nasir often uses the word *dihqān* as an opposite to Arab, i.e. settled Persian agriculturist, and generally Persian. It is quite improbable that a person should have it as a name. After Hasan Mas'ūd (Hasan b. Mas'ūd ?) there is again a sign of interrogation.

<sup>48</sup> Cf my "Rise of the Fatimids," pp. 59-60.

<sup>49</sup> As is known, Nishāpūr is one of the cities which was many times ruined, and was rebuilt on a new site. The present Nishāpūr is a shabby town merely occupying a corner of the area which was at one time or another the site of the mediæval city. G. Le Strange, in his book "The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate" (Cambridge, 1930), p. 383, erroneously writes *Abrashahr*, and explains it as "meaning 'Cloud-city' in Persian." In reality, however, *abar* here is merely the archaic form of the ordinary modern Persian *bar*, on, upon, above. *Abarshahr* simply means "the Upper Town."

<sup>50</sup> Those who are familiar with Persian popular poetry, *chārbayātis* sung by camelmen, or by peasants when working in their fields, etc., may easily recognize substantial resemblance between Nasir's "beginnings" of his *qasidas*, and the first line in popular songs. The only difference is that while in a *chārbayātī*, i.e. a piece of four lines, only one line is devoted to the picture of nature, Nasir can afford to use several. His pictures of nature are more elaborate, of course, but the idea and tone seems to be the same.



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